

THE BATTLE OF LIFE;

A D R A M A,

IN

Three Acts.

(FOUNDED ON MR. DICKENS'S CELEBRATED WORK.)

BY EDWARD STIRLING, ESQ.

*Author of The Hand of Cards, Blue Jackets, Norah Creina,
Bachelors' Buttons, Margaret Catchpole. On the Tiles, Above
and Below, Popping in and out, Lestelle, Captain
Charlotte, The Sealed Sentence, &c. &c.*

THE ONLY EDITION CORRECTLY MARKED, BY PERMISSION
FROM THE PROMPTER'S BOOK.

To which is added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS
THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS,
SITUATIONS—ENTRANCES—EXITS—PROPERTIES, AND
DIRECTIONS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE
London Theatres.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE ENGRAVING
By Mr. T. Jones, from a Drawing, taken expressly in the Theatre.

LONDON:

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10, MIDDLE ROW, HOLBORN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Dr. Jeddler</i>	Mr. Neville.
<i>Alfred</i>	Mr. Johnson
<i>Michael Warden</i>	Mr. Fredericks
<i>Mr. Snitchey</i>	Mr. Heslop
<i>Mr. Craggs</i>	Mr. Lewis
<i>Ben Britain</i>	Mr. H. Webb
<i>Marion</i>	Mrs. Vining
<i>Grace</i>	Mrs. E. F. Saville
<i>Clemency Newcome</i>	Miss E. Terrey
<i>Mrs. Craggs</i>	Mrs. Daly
<i>Aunt Martha</i>	Mrs. Lewis

PERIOD—1746.

First produced at the Surrey Theatre, January, 1847.

Time in Representation---1 hour 30 minutes.

COSTUME.

Dr. Jeddler—Old fashioned black suit. Second, Dark brown

Alfred—Green suit, white waistcoat. Second, Dark drab

Snitchey—Snuff coloured suit. Second, Dark green

Craggs—Light blue coat, black smalls, white vest

Ben—Old fashioned livery. Second, Green coat drab smalls and red vest

Warden—Blue coat trimmed with lace, buff vest, high boots. Second, All black

Marion—White dress, wreath. Second, Black

Grace—Light blue. Second, Grey silk

Mrs. Snitchey—Drab silk dress

Mrs. Craggs—Red silk dress

Clemency—Chintz dress, blue petticoat. Second, Red gown, brown petticoat.

 Managers are requested to insert Mr. Stirling's name to this Drama in their bills.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*The Exterior of Dr. Jeddler's House and Orchard. House, R. H. Distant country seen through the orchard and gate. Apple trees scattered about. Under one of the trees a table, spread for breakfast. Chairs. A side table, L. H. GRACE and MARION discovered dancing. Musicians, rustic. Several Women gathering apples, and CLEMENCY in the tree, laughing.*

Clem. Oh, la! oh, dear! what capital fun. (*Holding her sides.*) Oh——

DR. JEDDLER enters from House, R. H. The Women run into House.

Dr. J. Music and dancing to-day! (*Speaking to himself.*) I thought they dreaded to-day. But it's a world of contradiction, Why, Grace—why, Marion—is the world more mad than usual this morning?

Mar. Make some allowance for it, father, if it be, for it's somebody's birth-day.

Dr. J. Somebody's birth-day, puss! (Don't you know it's always somebody's birth-day? Did you never hear how many performers enter on this—ha, ha, ha! it's impossible to speak gravely of it—on this preposterous and ridiculous business, called life, every minute?)

Mar. No, father.

Dr. J. No, not you, of course. You're a woman, almost. By the bye—(*Looking at her.*)—I suppose it's your birth-day?

Mar. No—do you really, father?

Dr. J. There—take my love with it—(*Kissing her.*)—and many happy returns of the—the idea, of the day: the notion of wishing happy returns of such a farce as this good—ha, ha, ha! Well, but how did you get the music? Poultry stealers, of course, Where did the minstrels come from?

Grace. Alfred sent the music

Dr. J. Oh, Alfred sent the music, did he?

Grace. Yes, he met it coming out of the town, as he was entering early. The men are travelling on foot, and rested there last night; and as it was Marion's birth-day, he thought it would please her. He sent them on with a pencilled note to me, saying, that if I thought so too, they had come to serenade her.

Dr. J. Ay, ay; he always takes your opinion.

Grace. And my opinion being favourable, and Marion being in high spirits, and beginning to dance, I joined her, and so we danced to Alfred's music till we were out of breath, and we thought the music all the gayer for being sent by Alfred—didn't we, dear Marion?

Mar. Oh, I don't know, Grace. How you tease me about Alfred.

Grace. Tease you by mentioning your lover?

Mar. I am sure I don't much care to have him mentioned. (*Pulling her flowers*) I am almost tired of hearing of him—and, as to his being my lover——

Grace. Hush! don't speak lightly of a true heart, which is all your own, Marion, even in jest. There is not a truer heart than Alfred's in the world.

Mar. No, no—perhaps not; but I don't know that there's any great merit in that. I—I don't want him to be so very true. I never asked him—if he expects that I——But, dear Grace, why need we talk of him at all just now! (*They exit among the trees, arm in arm.*)

Dr. J. Bless their hearts! (*Calls.*) Britain! Britain! holloa!

Ben Brituin. Now, then——

Enter BEN BRITAIN, from House.

Dr. J. Where's the breakfast table?

Ben. In the house.

Dr. J. Are you going to spread it out here, as you were told last night? Don't you know that there are gentlemen coming? that there's business to be done this morning before the coach comes by? that—this is a very particular occasion?

Ben. I couldn't do anything, Dr. Jeddler, till the women had done getting in the apples, could I?

Dr. J. Well, have they done now? (*Looks at his watch, and claps his hands.*) Come—make haste. Where's Clemency?

Clem. (*From tree.*) Here am I, mister! it's all done. Now clear away, gals—everything. (*To Girls, who have returned.*) All shall be ready for you in half a minute, Mister. (*They all clear the baskets; and place breakfast things.*)

Clem. (*At back.*) Here are them two lawyers a coming, Mister.

Dr. J. Aha! (*Advancing to gate.*) Good morning—good morning. Grace, my dear! Marion! Here are Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs. Where's Alfred? (*Grace and Marion re-enter.*)

Grace. He'll be back directly, father, no doubt. He had so much to do this morning in his preparations for departure, that he was up and out by daybreak. Good morning, gentlemen—

Enter from gate SNITCHHEY and CRAGGS, with blue bag.

Snitch. Ladies, for self and Craggs, good morning. (*To Marion.*) Miss, I kiss your hand, and I wish you a hundred happy returns of this auspicious day.

Dr. J. Ha, ha, ha! (*Laughs thoughtfully, with his hands in his pockets.*) The great farce in a hundred!

Snitch. You wouldn't, I am sure---(*Puts blue bag by table.*) ---cut the great farce short for this actress, at all events, Dr. Jeddler?

Dr. J. No, God forbid! May she live to laugh at it as long as she can laugh, and then say with the French wit, "The farce is ended, draw the curtain."

Snitch. The French wit—(*Peeps sharply into bag.*)—was wrong, Dr. Jeddler, and your philosophy is altogether wrong depend upon it, as I have often told you. Nothing serious in life! What do you call law?

Dr. J. A joke.

Snitch. Did you ever go to law?

Dr. J. Never!

Snitch. If you ever do, perhaps you'll alter that opinion.

Craggs. It's made a great deal too easy.

Dr. J. Law is?

Craggs. Yes, everything is. Everything appears to me to be made too easy, now-a-days—it's the vice of these times. If the world is a joke, I am not prepared to say it is, it ought to be made a very difficult joke to crack—it ought to be as hard a struggle, sir, as possible. That's the intention; but it's being made far too easy, we are oiling the gates of life—they ought to be rusty. We shall have them beginning to turn soon with a smooth sound, whereas they ought to grate upon their hinges, sir.

ALFRED enters hastily from gate, dressed for a journey. They all surround him.

Dr. J. Happy returns, Alfred!

Snitch. A hundred happy returns of this auspicious day, Mr. Heathfield.

Craggs. Returns!

Alf. Why, what a battery! (*Stopping short*) And one, two,

three, all foreboders of no good in the great sea before me. I am glad you are not the first I have met this morning—I should have taken it for a bad omen, but Grace was the first—sweet, pleasant Grace—so I defy you all.

Clem. (L.) If you please, Mister, I was the first, you know. She was a walking out here before sunrise, you remember I was in the house.

Alf. That's true—Clemency was the first, so I defy you with Clemency!

Snitch. Ha, ha! what a defiance!

Alf. Not so bad a one as it appears, may be (*Shakes hands with Doctor, Snitchey, and Craggs. Looks round.*) Where are the—Good heavens! (*Runs to Grace and Marion—he kisses them joyfully.*)

Dr. J. Come—come, children, breakfast waits. Be seated. [*Clemency waits at table, Ben Britain, at a smaller table, carves ham and beef.*]

Ben. Meat? [*Approaches Snitchey with knife and fork.*]

Snitch. Certainly.

Ben. Do you want any?

Craggs. Lean, and well done. [*Ben helps them, then the Doctor—Craggs nearly chokes—all assist.*]

Ben. I thought he was gone!

Dr. J. Now, Alfred, for a word or two of business, while we are yet at breakfast.

Snitch. While we are yet at breakfast?

Alf. If you please, sir.

Dr. J. If anything could be serious in such a ———

Alf. Farce as this, sir——

Dr. J. In such a farce as this, it might be, this recurrence on the eve of separation of a double birth-day which is connected with many associations pleasant to us four, and with the recollection of a long and amicable intercourse---that's not to the purpose.

Alf. Ah, yes, Doctor Jeddler, it is to the purpose, as my heart bears witness this morning, as as yours does, too, I know, if you would let it speak. I leave your house to-day---I cease to be your ward---to-day we part with tender relations, stretching far behind, that never can be exactly renewed, and with others dawning yet before us---[*Looking at Marion.*]---fraught with such considerations as I must not trust myself to speak of now. Come, come, there's a serious grain in this large foolish dust heap, Doctor. Let us allow to-day that there is one.

Dr. J. To-day! hear him! ha, ha, ha! of all days in the foolish year: Why on this day the great battle was fought

on this ground, on this ground where we now sit, where I saw my two girls dance this morning, where the fruit has just been gathered for our eating---from these trees, the roots of which are struck in them---not earth. So many lives were lost, that within my recollection, generations afterwards, a churchyard full of bones, and dust of bones, and chips of cloven skulls, has been dug up from underneath our feet here, yet not a hundred people in that battle knew for what they fought, or why; not a hundred of the inconsiderate rejoicers in the victory why they rejoiced---not half a hundred people were the better for the gain or loss - not half a dozen men agree to this hour on the cause or merits, and nobody, in short, ever knew anything distinct about it but the mourners of the slain. Serious, too! [*Laughing.*] Such a system!

Alf. But all this seems to me to be very serious. [*Clem. tumbles against table.*]

Clem. Oh! ia! ia!

Dr. J. What's the matter there?

Clem. It's this evil inclined blue bag, always tripping up somebody.

Snitch. With a purpose and intention in it that commands respect! Life, a farce, Doctor Jeddler, with law in it. I don't stand up for life in general. [*Rubs his hands, chuckling.*] It's full of folly, full of something, and all that. Bah! bah! bah! We see what they're worth. But you mustn't laugh at life. You've got a game to play - a very serious game, indeed. Everybody's playing against you, you know, and you're playing against them. Oh, it's a very interesting game---there are deep moves upon the board. You must only laugh, Dr. Jeddler, when you win, and then not much---he, he, he---and then not much!

Dr. J. Well, Alfred, what do you say now?

Alf. I say, sir, that the greatest favour you could do me, and yourself, too, I am inclined to think, would be to try sometimes to forget this battle field, and others like it, in that broader battle field of life, on which the sun looks every day.

Snitch. Really I'm afraid that wouldn't soften his opinions. Mr. Alfred. The combatants are very eager and very bitter in that same battle of life. There's a great deal of cutting and slashing, and firing into people's heads from behind, terrible treading down and trampling on. It's rather a bad business!

Alf. I believe, Mr. Snitchey, there are quiet victories and struggles, great sacrifices of self, and noble acts of heroism in it, even in many of its apparent lightnesses and contradictions,

not the less difficult to achieve because they have no earthly chronicle or audience—done every day in nooks and corners, and in little households, and in mens' and womens' hearts—any one of which might reconcile the sternest man to such a world, and fill him with belief and hope in it, though two-fourths of its people were at war, and another fourth at law, and that's a bold word! [*Grace and Marion listen.*]

Dr. J. Well, well, I am too old to be converted, even by my friend Snitchey, here, or my good spinster sister, Martha Jeddler, who had what she called her domestic trials ages ago, and has led a sympathising life with all sorts of people ever since, and who is so much of your opinion---(only she's less reasonable and more obstinate, being a woman)---that we can't agree, and seldom meet. I was born upon this battle field. I began as a boy to have my thoughts directed to the real history of a battle field. Sixty years have gone over my head, and I have never seen the Christian world, including, Heaven knows, how many loving mothers and good enough girls, like mine here, anything but mad for a battle field. The same contradictions prevail in everything. One must either laugh or cry at such stupendous inconsistencies, and I prefer to laugh. [*Ben Britain laughs hollowly, Clemency pokes him with her elbows.*]

Clem. [*Whispering.*] What are you laughing at?

Ben. Not you!

Clem. Who then?

Ben. Humanity—that's the joke!

Clem. What between master and them lawyers? He's getting more and more addle-headed every day! [*Pokes him.*] Do you know where you are? Do you want to get warning?

Ben. I don't know anything—I don't care for anything—I don't make out anything—I don't believe anything, and I don't want anything! [*Retires up.*]

Dr. J. But this is not our business, Alfred. Ceasing to be my ward (as you have said) to-day, and leaving as full to the brim of such learning as the grammar school down here was able to give you, and your studies in London could add to that, and such practical knowledge as a dull old country doctor like myself could graft upon both. You are away, now, into the world, the first term of probation appointed by your poor father being over, away you go now, your own master, to fulfil his second desire, and long before your three years' tour among the foreign schools of medicine is finished, you'll have forgotten us. Lord, you'll forget us easily in six months.

Alf. If I do—But you know better. Why should I speak to you? [*Laughs.*]

Dr. J. I don't know anything of the sort. What do say, Marion? (*Marion plays with her cuffs.*) I haven't been, I hope, a very unjust steward in the execution of my trust. Released, and what not, this morning, and here are our good friends, Snitchey and Craggs, with a bag full of papers and accounts, and documents, for the transfer of the balance of the trust fund to you—(I wish it was a more difficult one to dispose of Alfred, but you must get to be a great man, and make it so)—and other drolleries of that sort, which are to be signed, sealed, and delivered.

Snitch. And duly witnessed, as by law required. We shall want your two servants to attest the signatures, Can you read, Mrs. Newcome?

Clem. I amn't married, mister.

Snitch. You can read?

Clem. A little.

Snitch. The marriage service night and morning.

Clem. No, too hard—I only reads a thimble.

Snitch. Read a thimble? what are you talking about, young woman?

Clem. And a nutmeg grater.

Snitch. Why this is a lunatic—a subject for the Lord High Chancellor. And what does the thimble say, Mrs. Newcome?

Clem. I amn't married, mister.

Snitch. Well, Newcome, will that do? What does the thimble say, Newcome? (*Clemency empties her pockets, and gives contents to Britain to hold—finds thimble, after much trouble.*)

Clem. That's him! (*Shows thimble.*)

Snitch. That's the thimble, is it, young woman? and what does the thimble say?

Clem. It says—(*Reads slow.*) "Forget and forgive."
[*Snitchey and Craggs laugh.*]

Snitch. So new!

Craggs. So easy!

Snitch. Such a knowledge of human nature in it.

Craggs. So applicable to the affairs of life.

Snitch. And the nutmeg grater?

Clem. The grater says, "Do as you would be done by."

Snitch. Do, or you'll be done—brown, you mean.

Clem. I don't understand. (*Shaking her head.*) I an't no lawyer.

Snitch. If Mr. Britain will oblige us with a mouthful of ink—[*Returning to papers.*—we'll sign, seal, and deliver as soon as possible, or the coach will be coming past before we know

where we are. (*Ben Britain stands abstractedly. Clemency pokes him with her elbow—Snitchey writes—they both sign papers—all attest it. Clemency laughing violently.*)

Dr. J. There, my dear Alfred, you are now your own master—fairly started on the journey of life. Britain, run to the gate and watch for the coach. Time flies. (*Alfred, Snitchey, and Craggs place papers in bag—Britain moves slowly up Stage—Clemency poking him with her elbows.*)

Alf. Yes, sir, yes. [*Aside to Grace.*] Dear Grace! a moment! Marion—so young and beautiful, so winning, and so much admired, dear to my heart as nothing else in life is; remember, I leave Marion to you.

Grace. She has always been a sacred charge to me, Alfred. She is doubly so now. I will be faithful to my trust, believe me.

Alf. I do believe it, Grace. I know it well. Who could look upon your face, and hear your earnest voice and not know it. Oh, good Grace, if I had your well-governed heart and tranquil mind, how bravely I would leave this place to-day.

Grace. (*With a quiet smile.*) Would you?

Alf. And yet, Grace—sister seems the natural word.

Grace. Use it. I am glad to hear it. Call me nothing else.

Alf. And yet, sister, then, Marion and I had better have your true and steadfast qualities serving us here, and making us both happier and better. I wouldn't carry them away to sustain myself if I could.

Ben Britain. (*Calling.*) Coach upon the hill top!

Dr. J. Time flies, Alfred. (*Marion has been standing apart, her eyes on the ground—Alfred goes to her, and puts her over to Grace.*)

Alf. I have been telling Grace, dear Marion, that you are her charge—my precious trust at parting: and when I come back and reclaim you, and the bright prospect of our married life lies stretched before us, it shall be one of our chief pleasures to consult how we can make Grace happy, how we can anticipate her wishes, how we can show our gratitude and love to her, how we can return her something of the debt she has heaped upon us. And when the time comes, as it must one day—(I wonder it has never come yet; but Grace knows best, for Grace is always right)—when she will want a friend to open her whole heart to, and to be to her something of what she has been to us, then, Marion, how faithful we will prove: and what delight to us to know that she, our dear good sister, loves and is loved again, as we would have her—and when all that is past, and we are

old, and living—(as we must together—close together, talking often of old times)—these shall be our favourite times among them—this day, most of all, and telling each other what we thought, and felt, and hoped, and feared, at parting, and how we couldn't bear to say good bye—

Brit. Coach coming through the wood!

Alf. Yes, I am ready—and how we met again so happily, in spite of all. We'll make this day the happiest in all the year, and keep it as a treble birth-day, shall we, dear?

Grace. Yes, yes, Alfred—don't linger—there's no time. Say good bye to Marion, and heaven be with you! (*Alfred pressing Marion to his heart.*)

Dr. J. Farewell, my boy! To talk about any serious correspondence, or serious affections, and engagements, and so forth in such a—Ha, ha, ha! you know what I mean—why that, of course, would be sheer nonsense. All I can say is, that if you and Marion should continue in the same foolish mind, I shall not object to have you for a son-in-law one of these days.

Ben. Over the bridge!

Alf. Let it come. (*Shakes the Doctor's hand.*) Think of me sometimes, my old friend and guardian, as seriously as you can. Adieu, Mr. Snitchey—farewell Mr. Craggs!

Ben. Coming down the road!

Alf. A kiss of Clemency Newcome, for long acquaintance sake. Shake hands, Britain—Marion, dearest heart, good bye! Sister Grace, remember—(*Music. Coach appears at the gate with Passengers. Horn sounds. Alfred mounts the roof—Clemency waves her hand—Doctor, Snitchey, and Craggs, stand at gate, as the coach moves on.*)

Grace. He waves his hat to you, my love! Your chosen husband, darling, look!

Mar. Oh, Grace! God bless you, but I cannot bear to see it, Grace—it breaks my heart! (*Falls into Grace's arms. Act Drop descends rapidly.*)

END OF ACT I.

(*A lapse of Three Years between the First and Second Acts.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I—*The Office of Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs. A large deed box, with "M. Warden, Esq." inscribed on it, stands near him. Paper, books, &c. Inkstand on desk. Music.*

SNITCHEY and CRAGGS discovered seated at a desk. MICHAEL WARDEN seated on a chair, R. H.

Ward. My affairs are bad indeed. You are certain there is no other resource, gentlemen?

Snitch. (Turning up the last paper.) No other resource.

Ward. All lost, spent, wasted, pawned, borrowed, and sold, eh?

Snitch. All!

Ward. Nothing else to be done, you say?

Snitch. Nothing at all. (Warden bites his nails and thinks.)

Ward. And I am not even personally safe in England? You hold to that, do you?

Snitch. In no part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Ward. A mere prodigal son, with no father to go to, no swine to keep, and no husks to share with them, eh? (Rocks one leg over the other.) Ruined at thirty! Humph!

Snitch. Not ruined, Mr. Warden—not so bad as that. You have done a good deal towards it, I must say, but you are not ruined. A little nursing—

Ward. A little devil!

Snitch. Mr. Craggs, will you oblige me with a pinch of snuff? Thank you, sir.

Ward. You talk of nursing. How long nursing?

Snitch. How long nursing? (Calculating.) For your involved estate, sir? In good hands? S. and C. say, six or seven years.

Ward. To starve for six or seven years. (Impatiently.)

Snitch. To starve for six or seven years, Mr. Warden, would be very uncommon indeed; you might get another estate by showing yourself the while. But we don't think you could do it—speaking for self and Craggs, and consequently don't advise it.

Ward. What do you advise?

Snitch. Nursing, I say, some few years of nursing, by self and Craggs, would bring it round. But to enable us to make terms, and hold terms, and you to keep terms, you must go away—you must live abroad. As to starvation, we could ensure you some hundreds a year to starve upon, even in the beginning, I dare say, Mr. Warden.

Ward. Hundreds—and I have spent thousands!

Snitch. That—(Putting papers slowly back in box.)—there is no doubt about. No doubt about.

Ward. After all, my iron-headed friend—

Snitch. Self, and—excuse me—Craggs. (Pointing to Craggs)

Ward. I beg Mr. Craggs's pardon. After all, my iron-headed friends, you don't know half my ruin yet. (*Both stare at him.*) I am not only deep in debt, but I am deep in—

Snitch. Not in love?

Ward. Yes—(*Looks at them, with his hands in his pockets.*)—deep in love.

Snitch. And not with an heiress, sir?

Ward. Not with an heiress.

Snitch. Nor a rich lady?

Ward. Nor a rich lady, that I know of—except in beauty and merit.

Snitch. A single lady, I trust?

Ward. Certainly.

Snitch. It's not one of Doctor Jeddler's daughters?

Ward. Yes!

Snitch. Not his younger daughter?

Ward. Yes!

Snitch. Mr. Craggs, will you oblige me with another pinch of snuff? Thank you. I am happy to say it don't signify, Mr. Warden. She's engaged, sir. She's bespoke. My partner can corroborate me. We know the fact.

Craggs. We know the fact.

Ward. Why so do I, perhaps, what of that? Are you men of the world, and did you never hear of a woman changing her mind?

Snitch. There certainly have been actions for breach brought against both spinsters, and widows, but in the majority of cases——

Ward. Cases! Don't talk to me of cases. The general precedent is in a much larger volume than any of your law books. Besides, do you think I have lived six weeks in the Doctor's house for nothing?

Snitch. (*To Craggs.*) I think, sir, that of all the scrapes Mr. Warden's horses have brought him into at one time and another—and they have been pretty numerous, and pretty expensive, as none know better than himself, and you, and I—the worst scrape may turn out to be, if he talks in this way, his having been ever left by one of them at the Doctor's garden wall, with three broken ribs, a snapped collar bone, and the Lord knows how many bruises. We didn't think so much of it at the time, when we knew he was going on well under the Doctor's hands and roof; but it looks bad now, sir—bad! it looks very bad. Doctor Jeddler, too—our client, Mr. Craggs.

Craggs. Mr. Alfred Heathfield, too—a sort of client, Mr. Snitchey.

Ward. Mr. Michael Warden, too, a kind of client, and no

bad one either: having played the fool for ten or twelve years. However, Mr. Michael Warden has sown his wild oats now—there's their crop, in that box—and means to repent and be wise. And in proof of it, Mr. Michael Warden means, if he can, to marry Marion, the Doctor's lovely daughter, and to carry her away with him.

Snitch. Really, Mr. Craggs—

Ward. Really, Mr. Snitchey, and Mr. Craggs, partners both, you know your duty to your clients, and you know well enough, I am sure, that it is no part of it to interfere in a mere love affair, which I am obliged to confide to you. I am not going to carry the young lady off, without her own consent. There's nothing illegal in it. I never was Mr. Heathfield's bosom friend. I violate no confidence of his. I love where he loves, and I mean to win where he would win, if I can.

Snitch. He can't Mr. Craggs—he can't do it, sir. She dotes on Mr. Alfred.

Ward. Does she?

Snitch. Mr. Craggs, she doats on him, sir.

Ward. I didn't live six weeks, some few months ago, in the Doctor's house for nothing, and I doubted that soon, she would have doated on him, if her sister could have brought it about; but I watched them. Marion avoided his name, avoided the subject: shrunk from the least allusion to it, with evident distress.

Snitch. Why should she, Mr. Craggs, you know? Why should she, sir?

Ward. I don't know why she should, though there are many likely reasons—but I know she does. She was very young when she made the engagement—if it may be called one—I am not even sure of that—and has repented of it, perhaps. Perhaps - it seems a foppish thing to say—but, upon my soul, I don't mean it in that light—she may have fallen in love with me, as I have fallen in love with her.

Snitch. He! he! Mr. Alfred, her old playfellow, too, you remember, Mr. Craggs. (*Laughs disconcertedly.*) Knew her almost from a baby.

Ward. Which makes it the more probable that she may be tired of his idea, and not indisposed to exchange it for the newer one of another lover, who presents himself—(or is presented by his horse)—under romantic circumstances, has the not unfavourable reputation, with a country girl, of having lived thoughtlessly and gaily, without doing much harm to anybody, and who for his youth and figure, and so forth—this may seem foppish again, but upon my soul, I don't mean it in that light—might perhaps pass muster in a crowd, with Mr.

Alfred himself. [*Taking Snitchey's button.*] You are right to keep quite aloof from all parties in such a matter, which is not one in which grave men like you could interfere on any side. I am briefly going to review, in half-a-dozen words, my position and intention, and then I shall leave it to you to do the best for me, in money matters, that you can: seeing, that, if I run away with the Doctor's beautiful daughter—(as I hope to do, and to become another man, under her bright influence)—it will be for the moment, more chargeable than running away alone. But I shall soon make all that up, in an altered life.

Snitch. I think it will be better not to hear this, Mr. Craggs.

Craggs. I think not. [*Both listen attentively.*]

Ward. Well, you needn't hear it. I'll mention it, however. I don't mean to ask the Doctor's consent, because he wouldn't give it me, but I mean to do the Doctor no wrong, or harm, because—(besides there being nothing serious in such trifles as these, as he says)—I hope to rescue his child, my Marion, from what I see, I know she dreads, and contemplates with misery, that is, the return of her old lover. If anything in the world is true, it is true that she dreads his return. Nobody is injured so far. I am so harried and worried here, just now, that I lead the life of a flying fish. Skulk about in the dark, am shut out of my own house, and warned off my own grounds. But that house, and those grounds, and many an acre besides, will come back to me one day, as you know and say, and Marion will probably be richer—on your showing, who are never sanguine—ten years hence as my wife, than as the wife of Alfred Heathfield, whose return she dreads—(remember that)—and in whom, or in any man, my passion is not surpassed. Who is injured yet? It is a fair case throughout. My right is as good as his, if she decide in my favour, and I will try my right by her alone. You will like to know no more of this, and I will tell you no more. Now you know my purpose and wants, when must I leave here?

Snitch. In a week.

Craggs. In something less, I should say.

Ward. In a month. This day month. To-day is Thursday. Succeed or fail, on this day month I go.

Snitch. It's too long a delay, much too long. But let it be so. [*Aside.*] I thought he'd have stipulated for three. Are you going? Good night, sir.

Ward. Good night. [*Shakes hands with both.*] You'll live to see me making a good use of riches yet. Henceforth, the star of my destiny is Marion. [*Going.*]

Snitch. Take care of the stairs, sir, for she don't shine there. Good night.

Ward. Good night ! (*Exit side door, R. H. Snitchey and Craggs stand looking at each other.*)

Snitch. What do you think of all this Mr. Craggs ? (*Craggs shakes his head.*) Perhaps he deceives himself altogether [*Locking up box and putting it away.*] Or if he don't, a little bit of fickleness and perfidy is not a miracle, Mr. Craggs---and yet I thought that pretty face was very true. I thought ---[*Putting on great coat, drawing on gloves, and snuffing out one candle.*]---that I had even seen her character becoming, stronger, and more resolved of late---more like her sister's.

Craggs. Mrs. Craggs was of the same opinion.

Snitch. I'd really give a trifle to-night if I could believe that Mr. Warden was reckoning without his host, but light-headed, capricious, and unballasted as he is, he knows something of the world and its people---(he ought to, for he has bought what he does know dear enough)---and I can't quite think that. We had better not interfere: we can do nothing, Mr. Craggs, but keep quiet.

Craggs. Nothing.

Snitch. Our friend, the Doctor, makes light of such things. I hope he mayn't stand in need of his philosophy. Our friend Alfred talks of the battle of life, I hope he mayn't be cut down early in the day. Have you got your hat, Mr. Craggs ? I am going to put the other candle out.

Craggs. Yes. (*They grope their way out in the dark. Music.*)

SCENE II.—*A Kitchen in Dr. Jeddler's House. Large door and window in flat, through which the country is seen when the curtains are withdrawn. Snow falling.*

BENJAMIN BRITAIN enters *R. H. with small table and two chairs. On table a jug of ale, a pipe, and candle.*

Ben. There—that's what a man of moderate sentiments may call cosy and comfortable. Plenty to eat, ditto to drink, and nothing to pay. (*Sits.*) I do love a pipe—it mollifies a man's spirits so. (*Smokes.*) 'Specially when the baccy's smuggled.

CLEMENCY enters *L. A. laughing.*

Well, Clemmy, how are you by this time—and what's the news ?

Clem. Immense, glorious news ! Master Alfred's coming home to-night—he'll be just in time for master's ball. I took the letter in—there was an A. H. in the corner. I bet we shall soon have a wedding in the house—there was two spoons in my sau this morning.

Ben. There'll be another job for Snitchey and Craggs, I suppose—more witnessing for you and me, perhaps, Clemmy.

Clem. Lor! (*Twisting her elbows.*) I wish it was me, Britain.

Ben. Wish what was you?

Clem. A going to be married.

Ben. (*Takes pipe out of his mouth and laughs.*) Yes, you're a likely subject for that. Poor Clem!

Clem. (*Laughs.*) Yes, I'm a likely subject for that, an't I?

Ben. You'll never be married, you know.

Clem. Don't you think I ever shall, though?

Ben. Not a chance of it.

Clem. Only think! Well, I suppose you mean to, Britain, one of these days, don't you?

Ben. (*Puffs out smoke—pauses.*) Ye e-s—I think it may come to that at last.

Clem. I wish her joy, whoever she may be.

Ben. Oh, she'll have that, safe enough.

Clem. But she wouldn't have led quite such a joyfal life as she will lead—and wouldn't have had quite such a sociable sort of a husband at she will have—(*Leans over table.*)—if it hadn't been for—not that I went to do it, for it was accidental, I am sure—if it hadn't been for me—now would she, Britain?

Ben. Certainly not. Oh, I'm greatly obliged to you, you know, Clem.

Clem. (*Rubs her elbows with candle grease.*) Lor, how nice that is to think of!

Ben. You see, I've made a good many investigations of one sort and another in my time, having been always of an enquiring turn of mind. and I've read a good many books about the general rights of things, and wrongs of things—for I went into the literary line myself when I began life.

Clem. Did you, though?

Ben. Yes, I was hid for the best part of two years behind a book stall, ready to fly out if anybody pocketed a volume; and after that I was light porter to a stay and mantua maker, in which capacity I was employed to carry about, in oilskin baskets, nothing but deceptions, which soured my spirits and disturbed my confidence in human nature; and after that, I heard a world of discussions in this house, which soured my spirits fresh; and my opinion after all is, that as a safe and comfortable sweetener of the same and as a pleasant guide through life, there's nothing like a nutmeg grater, combined with a thimble

Clem. Do as you would, you know, and cetter, (*Folds her arms, and pats her elbows.*) Such a short cut, ain't it?

Ben. I'm not sure that it's what would be considered good philosophy. I've my doubts about that, but it wears well, and saves a quantity of snarling, which the genuine article don't always.

Clem. See how you used to go on once yourself, you know.

Ben. Ah, but the most extraordinary thing, Clemmy, is that I should live to be brought round through you. That's the strange part of it. Through you! Why I suppose you haven't so much as half an idea in your head.

Clem. (*Laughing.*) No, I don't suppose I have.

Ben. I'm pretty sure of it.

Clem. Oh, I dare say you're right. I don't pretend to none—I don't want any.

Ben. (*Laughs heartily.*) What a natural you are, Clemmy! But I can't help liking you; you're a regular good creature in your way, so shake hands, Clem. Whatever happens, I'll always take notice of you, and be a friend to you.

Clem. Will you? Well, that's very kind of you.

Ben. Yes, yes—(*Gives her pipe to knock the ashes out.*)—I'll stand stand by you. Hark! that's a curious noise.

Clem. Noise?

Ben. A footstep outside. Somebody dropping from the wall, it sounded like. Are they all a-bed up stairs? (*Both listen at door.*)

Clem. Yes, all a-bed by this time.

Ben. Didn't you hear anything?

Clem. No.

Ben. (*Takes down lantern, lights candle.*) I tell you what, I'll have a look round before I go to bed myself, for satisfaction's sake. Undo the door, while I light this, Clemmy.

Clem. (*Unfastens door.*) You'll only have your walk for your pains.

Ben. Very likely.

Clem. It's as quiet as a church yard—[*Looking after him.*]—and almost as ghostly, too!

MARION enters cautiously, L. H. wrapped in a mantle.
What's that?

Mar. [*In an agitated whisper.*] Hush! You have always loved me, have you not—

Clem. Loved you, child! You may be sure I have.

Mar. I am sure—and I may trust you, may I not? There is no one else, just now, in whom I can trust.

Clem. Yes.

Mar. There is some one out there—[*Points to door.*]—

whom I must see and speak with to-night. Michael Warden, for Col's sake, retire—not now! [*Warden appears at the door.*] In another moment you may be discovered! Not now! Wait, if you can, in some concealment—I will come presently. [*He waves his hand and disappears.*] Don't go to bed—wait here for me! I have been seeking to speak to you for an hour past. Oh, be true to me. [*Music. Exit D. F. The lantern light is seen through door. Ben re-appears at the door. Clemency sinks in a chair, weeping.*]

Ben. (*Locking and barring door.*) All still and peaceable. Nobody there. Fancy, I suppose. One of the effects of having a lively imagination. Holloa! Why what's the matter?

Clem. (*Chafing her elbows.*) Matter! That's good in you, Britain, that it is, after going and frightening one out of one's life with noises and lanterns, and I don't know what all. Matter! oh, yes!

Ben. If you're frightened out of your wits, Clemmy, that apparition's very soon got rid of. (*Blows it out, and hangs it up.*) But you're as bold as brass in general, and were, after the noise and the lantern, too. What have you taken into your head? Not an idea, eh?

Clem. There—good night. Go—go up stairs. Go to bed. I'm not alarmed.

Ben. Oh, good bye! What creturs these women things are, with their whims and fancies. No accounting, or summing them up—no, never! (*Exit R. H.*)

Mar. (*At door.*) Open the door, and stand there close beside me, while I speak to him outside. (*Clemency stands at door, opens it—Marion and Warden are seen. Tableau. They whisper.*)

Ward. In an hour the boat will be in the creek! (*Exit.*)

Clem. (*Crying, and embracing Marion.*) It's little that I know, my dear—very little—but I know that this should not be. Think of what you do.

Mar. I have thought of it many times.

Clem. Once more—till to-morrow—(*Marion shakes her head.*) For Mr. A-fred's sake—him that you loved so dearly once—

Mar. (*Hides her face.*) Once!

Clem. Let me go out. I'll tell him what you like. Don't cross the door-step to-night; I'm sure no good will come of it. Oh, it was an unhappy day when Mr. Warden was ever brought here! Think of your good father, darling of your sister—

Mar. I hase. You don't know what I lo I must speak to

him ! You are the best and truest friend in all the world for what you have said to me, but I must take this step ! *(She kisses her.)*

Clem. (Crying.) Oh, miss—darling, don't—think of your father—sister—think of poor Ben—oh, oh !

Mar. Hush ! we shall be heard—come ! *(Leads her out crying, L. H.)*

SCENE III.—*A Hall at Dr. Jeddler's, decorated for a Christmas party. Evergreens, mistletoe bough hanging, C. Benches, candles in branches, old fashioned fire-place, real fire.*

When the Scene opens, Musicians, numerous Male and Female Guests, DR. JEDDLER, and GRACE, are assembled. A Cotillion is danced. After dance, MARION enters R. H. wearing a wreath. Grace runs to her, adjusting her wreath.

Grace. Where have you been, love ? You've missed several dances. Your wreath is out of place, too. The next I adjust on this fair head will be a marriage wreath, or I'm no true prophet. There——

Mar. (Kisses her.) A moment, Grace—don't leave me yet. Are you sure that I want nothing more ?

Grace. My art can go no further, nor your beauty. I never saw you look so lovely as now.

Mar. I never was so happy !

Grace Aye, but there is greater happiness in store. In such another home, as cheerful and as bright as this looks now, Alfred and his young wife will soon be living.

Mar. It is a happy home, Grace, in your fancy. I can see it in your eyes. I know it will be happy, dear ! How glad I am to know it.

Dr. J. (Bustles towards them.) Here we are—all ready for Alfred, eh ? He can't be here until pretty late ; an hour or so before midnight, so there'll be plenty of time for merry making before he comes. He'll not find us with the ice unbroken. Pile up the fire ! Here, Britain !

Enter BRITAIN, R. H

Let it shine upon the holly till it winks again. It's a world of nonsense, puss ! true lovers, and all the rest of it, all nonsense ! but we'll be nonsensical with the rest of 'em, and give our true lover a mad welcome. Upon my word, I'm not clear to-night among other absurdities, but that I'm the father of two handsome girls.

Mar. All that one of them has ever done, or may do—may do, dearest father, to cause you pain or grief, forgive her—

forgive her now, when her heart is full. Say that you forgive her---that you will forgive her---that she shall always share your love, and——— (*Conceals her face on the Doctor's shoulder.*)

Dr. J. Tut, tut, tut ! Forgive ! What have I to forgive ? Heyday ! if our true lovers come back to flurry us like this, we must hold 'em at a distance ; we must send express-es out stop 'em short upon the road, and bring 'em on a mile or two a day, until we're properly prepared to meet 'em. Kiss me, puss ! Forgive ! Why what a silly child you are ! If you had vexed and crossed me fifty times a-day, instead of not at all, I'd forgive you everthing but such a supplication. Kiss me again, puss ! There---prospective and retrospective---a clear score between us, Pile up the fire, here ! Would you freeze the people on this bleak December night ? Let us be light, and warm, and merry, or I'll not forgive some of you !

Enter MRS. SNITCHEY, and MR. & MRS. CRAGGS, shewn in by Britain,

Dr. J. Where's Snitchey ?

Mrs. C. That nasty office !

Mrs. S. I wish it was burnt down !

Craggs. He's—he's—there's a little matter of business that keeps my partner rather late.

Mrs. S. Oh, business ! Don't tell me———

Mrs. C. We know what business means. I wonder you could come away, Mr Craggs.

Mrs. S. Mr Craggs is fortunate, I'm sure.

Mrs. C. That office so engrosses 'em.

Mrs. S. A person with an office has no business to be married at all !

Craggs Good evening, ma'am ! You look charmingly. Your—your sister, Miss Marion, is she———

Grace. Oh, she's quite well, Mr. Craggs.

Craggs. Yes, I——is she here ?

Grace. Here ! Don't you see her yonder, going to dance ? (*Craggs puts on his spectacles. Music. A general Old English Dance,*)

SNITCHEY enters R. H. touches Craggs' arm.

Craggs. Is he gone ?

Snitch. Hush ! he has been with me for three hours and more. He went over everything—he looked into all our arrangements for him, and was very particular indeed, (*At the end of Dance Marion mixes with crowd and disappears, unnoticed, first giving a letter to Britain, and whispering to him.*)

Craggs. You see ! All's safe and well. He didn't recur to that subject, I suppose ?

Snitch. Not a word.

Craggs. And is he really gone—is he safe away?

Snitch. He keeps to his word. He drops down the river with the tide, in that shell of a boat of his; and so goes to sea on this dark night—a dare devil he is—before the wind. There's no such lonely road anywhere else—that's one thing. The tide flows, he says, an hour before midnight, about this time. I'm glad it's over. (*Wipes his face.*)

Mrs. S. Well, sir, I hope the office is satisfied.

Snitch. Satisfied with what, my dear?

Mrs. S. With the exposure of a defenceless woman to ridicule and remark. That is quite in the way of the office—that is—

Snitch. (*Gives her his arm.*) As to my having been away to-night, my dear, the deprivation has been mine, I'm sure; but, as Mr. Craggs knows—(*Looks.*)

Mrs. S. Mr. Craggs, indeed, sir! If you can look that man in the eye this night, and not know that you're deluded, practised upon, made the victim of his arts, and bent down prostrate to his will—by some unaccountable fascination, which it is impossible to explain, and against which no warning of mine is of the least avail—all I can say is, I pity you.

Dr. J. (*Approaches.*) Come, come, ladies—we are waiting for another dance. Pair off!

Mrs. S. I wish we could!

Snitch. My love—

Dr. J. Places—places! (*The Cushion Dance. The Doctor kisses Mrs. Snitchey—all laugh—Britain loud, and drops glasses he is handing round. Scene closed in.*)

SCENE IV.—*Exterior of Doctor Jeddler's House—same as Act I. only snow falling. Lights seen^d in the windows, Music and laughter heard within.*

Enter WARDEN, stealthily, R. H.

War. All is ready. The boat prepared, we can soon drop down the river. The open sea once gained, the prize is mine, and a fair one she is, well worth a life's risk. (*D. F. opens—Marion peeps forth.*)

Mar. (*Whispers.*) Are you there?

War. Yes, ready to perish for you! (*Runs to her.*) Let us away—(*Kisses her hand, wraps cloak about her, leads her forward—her face turned towards house.*)

Mar. Grace—sister—dear father—I—

War. Reflect not, love; I will be all—everything to you. Come—come—(*i se of chaise without.*)

Mar. That sound! 'Tis he! Let us away—I am ready! Fly—fly! (*Warden and Marion exit hastily R. Clemency seen at door crying.*)

Clem. Oh, my! (*Rubbing her elbows.*) Oh, my! that ever I should live to see it, know it, and not tell it. But I promised, and I couldn't. Oh, oh! (*Noise of chaise near—it stops.*)

Alf. (*Without.*) Take the luggage to the kitchen gate.

Clem. That's Master Alfred. I vow I shall swoon dead!

Enter ALFRED, L. H. in travelling dress.

Alf. Lights! sounds of music and merry-making! Kind, good old friend—this is all to welcome me home. Dear Grace—Marion! Oh, what joy that name conjures up. (*Hastens to door.*)

Clem. (*Stops him with a cry.*) Oh!

Alf. Clemency, don't you know me?

Clem. (*Pushing him back.*) Don't come in. Go away!

Alf. What is the matter?

Clem. I don't know—I'm afraid to think—go back—hark! (*A noise of voices within. She screams, putting her hand to her ears. A loud scream. Grace rushes out, Alfred catches her in his arms.*)

Alf. Grace! What is it? is she dead? (*Grace gazes in his face, and falls at his feet with a groan. All the Characters, Jeddler, Snitchey, Craggs, Mrs. Craggs, and Guests, rush out with lights.*)

Alf. What is it! (*Looking from one to another.*) Will no one look at me? Will no one speak to me? Does no one know me? Is there no voice among you all to tell me what it is?

Omnes. She is gone!

Alf. Gone?

Dr. J. [*With letter in his hand, in a broken voice.*] Fled, my dear Alfred—gone from her home and us, to-night! She writes that she has made her innocent and blameless choice; entreats that we will forgive her, prays that we will not forget her, and is gone!

Alf. With whom? where? [*Starts wild'y up.*] Oh, misery! misery! [*Music. Hurries across stage, staggers back, and sinks on his knees by Grace. All groupe. Tableau.*]

END OF ACT II.

[*A lapse of Six Years.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Bar in the "Nutmeg Grater" Inn. Fireplace. D. in F. Table, two Chairs, Tea things on table. Music.*

BEN BRITAIN *discovered standing before the fire, looking at his watch.*

Ben. Mrs. B. is rather late. It's tea time. She hadn't much to do, I think. There were a few little matters of business after market, but not many. [*Noise of cart wheels.*] Oh, here we are, at last.

Clem. [*Without.*] Put the horse up, Harry, and if he coughs, give him a warm mash.

Enter CLEMENCY, D. F. loaded with parcels, baskets, umbrella, red cloak, bonnet, &c.

Ben. You're late, Clemmy.

Clem. Why, you see, Ben, I've had a deal to do. [*Looks over packages.*] Eight, nine, ten—where's eleven? Oh, my basket's eleven; it's all right. Eight, nine, ten. Why, where's eleven? Oh, I forgot—it's all right. How's the children, Ben?

Ben. Hearty, Clemmy, hearty.

Clem. Bless their precious faces! [*Smoothing her hair*] Give us a kiss, old man——! [*Kisses him. Draws forth an immense bulk of thin books & crumpled papers from her pockets.*] I think I've done everything. Bills all settled, turnips sold, brewer's account looked into and paid, bacco pipes ordered, seventeen pound four paid into the Bank—Doctor Heathfield's charge for little Clem—you'll guess what that is—Doctor Heathfield won't take a farthing again, Ben.

Ben. I thought he wouldn't.

Clem. No, he says whatever family you was to have, Ben, he'd never put you to the cost of a halfpenny—not if you was to have twenty. An't it kind of him?

Ben. Very. It's the sort of kindness I wouldn't presume upon, on any account.

Clem. No, of course not. Ha, ha! There—take all the papers, and lock 'em up. Oh, wait a minute—here's a printed bill, to stick on the wall, wet from the printer's—how nice it smells!

Ben. What's this?

Clem. I don't know. I haven't read a word of it.

Ben. "To be sold by Auction, unless previously disposed of by private contract, Mansion, &c., Offices, Shrubberies, Ring Fence, &c., Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs, &c., Orna-

mental Portion of the unencumbered Freehold Property of Michael Warden, Esq, intending to continue to reside abroad."

Clem. And it was only this very day that I heard it whispered at the old house, that better and plainer news had been half promised of her soon. Dear, dear, dear! there'll be heavy hearts, Ben, yonder! [*Sits to tea.*] It's the first time I've sat down quietly to-day, I declare.

Ben. [*Drinking from saucer.*] Ah!

Clem. And that same Mr. Michael Warden lost me my place,

Ben. And got you your husband.

Clem. Well, so he did, and many thanks to him.

Ben. Man's the creature of habit. I had somehow got used to you, Clem, and I found I shouldn't be able to get on without you, so we went and got made man and wife. Ha, ha! We! Who'd have thought it?

Clem. [*Looking at bill.*] When Marion was known to be gone, and out of reach, dear girl, I couldn't help telling—for her sake quite as much as theirs---what I knew, could I?

Ben. You told it, any how.

Clem. And Dr. Jeddler, in his grief and passion, turned me out of house, and home. I never have been so glad of anything in all my life, as that I didn't say an angry word to him, and hadn't an angry feeling towards him even then, for he repented that truly afterwards. How often he has sat in this room, and told me, over and over again, he was sorry for it.

Enter MICHAEL WARDEN, in mourning, D. F.

Will you please to walk up stairs, sir? There's a very nice room up stairs, sir.

Ward. Thank you. May I come in here?

Clem. Oh, surely if you like, sir. What would you please to want, sir? (*Warden looks at bill.*)

Brit. Excellent property, that.

Ward. If you will let me have a draught of ale—(*Going to table by window.*)—and will let me have it here, without being any interruption to your meal, I shall be much obliged to you. (*Sits.*) I think I heard you mention Dr. Jeddler's name as I came in. Is the old man living?

Clem. Yes, he's living.

Ward. Much changed?

Clem. Since when, sir?

Ward. Since his daughter went away.

Clem. Yes: he's greatly changed since then. He's grey, and old, and hasn't the same way with him at all. At first he

was sadly broken down—and it was enough to make one's heart bleed to see him wane about, railing at the world; but a great change came over him for the better after a year or two, and then he began to like to talk about his lost daughter, and to praise her; ay, and the world too, and was never tired of saying, with the tears in his poor eyes, how beautiful and good she was. He had forgiven her then. That was about the same time as Miss Grace's marriage. Britain, you remember?

Brit. Yes.

Ward. The sister is married, then? To whom?

Clem. Did you never hear?

Ward. I should like to hear.

Clem. Ah, it would be a long story, if it was properly told. (*Resting her chin on her hand.*) That they grieved together, and remembered her together like a person dead—that they were so tender of her, never would reproach her, called her back to one another as she used to be, and found excuses for her. Every one knows that—I'm sure I do, no one better. (*Wipes her eyes.*)

Ward. And so—

Clem. And so, they at last were married. They were married on her birthday—it comes round again to-morrow—very quiet, very humble like, but very happy. Mr. Alfred said one night, when they were walking in the orchard, Grace, shall our wedding day be Marion's birthday? and it was.

Ward. And they have lived happily together?

Clem. Aye—no two people ever more so. They have had no sorrow but this. (*Motions to Ben violently.*)

Ben. (*Aside to her.*) Milk and water! Monthly warning! Mice and walnuts! (*She shakes her head.*)

Ward. And what is the after history of the young lady who went away? They know it, I suppose?

Clem. (*Shakes her head.*) I've heard that Dr. Jeddler is thought to know more of it than he tells. Miss Grace has had letters from her sister, saying that she was well and happy, and made much happier by her being married to Mr. Alfred, and has written letters back. But there's a mystery about her life and fortunes altogether, which nothing has cleared up to this hour, and which—

Ward. And which—

Clem. Which only one other person, I believe, could explain.

Ward. Who may that be?

Clem. Mr. Michael Warden. You remember me, sir. I saw just now you did. You remember me that night in the garden. I was with her.

Ward. Yes, you were.

Clem. Yes, sir—yes to be sure. This is my husband, if you please Ben, my dear Ben—run to Miss Grace—run to Mr. Alfred—run somewhere, Ben---bring somebody here directly.

Ward. Stay---what would you do

Clem. Let them know that you are here, sir. (*Claps her hands*) Let them know that they may hear of her from your own lips—let them know that she is not quite lost to them, but that she will come home again yet, to bless her father and her loving sister—even her old servant, even me, with a sight of her sweet face. Run, Ben, run! Let me speak to her if you please. I don't think she can know how truly they forgive her, how they love her, what joy it would be to them to see her once more. She may be timorous of going home. Perhaps if she sees me, it may give her a new heart. Only tell me truly, Mr. Warden, is she with you?

Ward. She is not. (*Shakes his head.*)

Clem. Is she d-d-dead? [*Sits down crying, hiding her face on table.*]

Enter MR. SNITCH.

Snitch. Good heaven, Mr. Warden! What wind has blown you here?

Ward. An ill wind, I am afraid.

Snitch. I can guess it all. But why did you ever come here, my good sir?

Ward. Come! How should I know who kept the house? When I sent my servant on to you, I strolled in here, because the place was new to me.

Snitch. Our caution, speaking for self and Craggs, deceased. (*Looking at his hatband*) It was not our place to make inquiries of you on such a delicate subject. I had my suspicions, sir, but it is not six months since I have known the truth, and been assured that you had lost her.

Ward. By whom?

Snitch. By Doctor Jeddler himself, sir: who at last reposed that confidence in me, voluntarily. He, and only he has known the whole truth, years and years.

Ward. And you know it?

Snitch. I do, sir, and I have also reason to know that it will be broken to her sister to-morrow evening. Pretty Marion! poor Marion! Cheer up, mistress You are married, now, you know, Clemency. (*Clemency sighs and shakes her head.*)

Brit. I rather think she is, mister.

Snitch. Well, well—wait till to-morrow.

Clem. To-morrow can't bring back the dead to life, mister. Poor Miss—Miss Marion, oh! [*Sobs.*]

Snitch. No, it can't do that, or it would bring back Mr. Craggs, deceased. But it may bring some soothing circumstances: [it may bring some comfort. Wait till to-morrow. *[Exit with Warden, D. F. Britain cries with Clemency, and supports her off crying.]*

Brit. Let's go and kiss the children.

Clem. Oh! oh!

(Exit rubbing her elbows.)

SCENE II.—*Orchard and House of Dr Jeddler, as in Act I. Music.*

ALFRED and GRACE seated under apple tree, C. with a little girl.

Alf. The time has flown, dear Grace, since our dear Marion—and yet it seems a long, long while ago. We count by changes and events within us, not by years.

Grace. Yet we have years to count by, since Marion was with us, six times, dear husband, counting to-night as one, we have sat here, on her birthday, and spoken together of that happy return so eagerly expected, and so long deferred. Ah, when will it be? when will it be?

Alf. But, Marion told you, in that farewell letter, which she left for you upon your table, love, and which you read so often, that years must pass away, before it *could* be, did she not?

Grace. *[Taking letter from her pocket and kissing it.]* Yes!

Alf. That through those intervening years, however happy she might be, she would look forward at the time when you would meet again and all would be made clear: and prayed you, trustfully and hopefully, to do the same. The letter runs so, does it not, my dear?

Grace. Yes, Alfred.

Alf. And every other letter she has written since?

Grace. Except the last—some months ago—in which she spoke of you, and what you then knew, and what I was to learn to-night.

Alf. *(Looking towards sun.)* The appointed time was sunset.

Grace. Alfred—*(Laying her hand upon his shoulder.)*—there is something in this letter, this old letter, which you say I read so often, that I have never told you. But to-night dear husband, with that sunset drawing near, and all our life seeming to soften and become hushed with the departing day, I cannot keep it secret.

Alf. What is it, love?

Grace. When Marion went away, she wrote me, here, that

you had once left her a sacred trust to me, and that now she left you, Alfred, such a trust in my hands, praying and beseeching me as I loved her, and as I loved you, not to reject the affection she believed—(she knew, she said)—you would transfer to me when the new wound was healed, but to encourage, and return it.

Alf. And make me a proud and happy man again, Grace. Did she say so?

Grace. She meant to make myself so blest, and honoured in your love.

Alf. Hear me, my dear. No—hear me, so—(Gently lays her head on his shoulder.) I know why I have never heard this passage in the letter until now. I know why no trace of it ever showed itself in any word or look of yours at that time. I know why, Grace, although so true a friend to me, was hard to win to be my wife; and, knowing it, my own! I know the priceless value of the heart I gird within my arms, and thank God for the rich possession. (Grace weeps.)

Grace. Alfred! (Quickly raising her head.) The sun is going down. You have not forgotten what I am to know before it sets.

Alf. You are to know the truth of Marion's history, my love.

Grace. All the truth? Nothing veiled from me any more? That was the promise, was it not?

Alf. It was. That truth is not reserved so long for me to tell. It is to come from other lips.

Grace (Faintly). From other lips?

Alf. Yes. I know your constant heart, I know how brave you are. I know that to you a word of preparation is enough. You have said truly, that the time is come—it is. Tell me that you have present fortitude to bear a trial—a surprise—a shock, and the messenger is waiting at the gate.

Grace. What messenger? And what intelligence does he bring?

Alf. I am pledged to say no more. Do you think you understand me?

Grace. I am afraid to think. (Hiding her face on his shoulder.)

Alf. Courage, my wife! When you have firmness to receive the messenger, the messenger is waiting at the gate. The sun is setting on Marion's birthday. Courage, courage, Grace. (She takes the little girl by the hand, and kisses it—as she stoops Marion enters the garden slowly, and Dr. Juddler. Alfred leads her forward.) Grace!

Grace. [Looks up.] What is that? That figure—its head laid upon my father's breast, and pressed against it to his lo-

ving heart! Oh, God! is it a vision that comes bursting from the old man's arms?

Mar. [*With a wild cry*] Sister! Sister!

Grace. Oh, Marion—Marion! Oh, my sister! Oh, my heart's dear love! Oh, joy and happiness unutterable, so to meet again! [*Embracing and kneeling with Marion.*] Stay, my sweet love—a moment! Oh, Marion, to hear you speak again! Why, why did you leave us, my own love?

Mar. When this was my dear home, Grace, as it will now be again, I loved him from my soul—I loved him most devotedly—I would have died for him. Though I was so young, I never slighted his affection in my secret breast for one brief instant. It was far beyond all price to me. Although it is so long ago, and past, and gone, and everything is wholly changed, I could not bear to think that you, who love so well, should think I didn't truly love him once. I never loved him better, Grace, than when he left this very scene, upon this very day—I never loved him better, dear one, than I did that night, when I left here. But he had gained, unconsciously—[*Smiling*]—another heart, before I knew that I had one to give him. That heart—yours, my sister—was so yielded up, in all its other tenderness to me, was so devoted, and so noble—I had its great example every day before me—I knew what I could do, Grace if I would, for you. I knew there were victories gained every day in struggling hearts to which these fields of battle were as nothing. This enabled me to make the resolution that I never would be Alfred's wife—that he should be my brother, and your husband—if the course I took could bring that happy end to pass—but that I never would—(Grace, I then loved him dearly, dearly!)—be his wife.

Grace. Oh, Marion! Oh, Marion!

Mar. I had tried to seem indifferent to him—(*Presses her sister's face against her own.*)—but that was hard; and you were always his true advocate. I had tried to tell you of my resolution, but you would never hear me—you would never understand me. The time was drawing near for his return—I knew that if I went away then, that end must follow, which has followed, and which has made us both so happy, Grace. While I was contesting with myself, and with my love of you, and home, Mr. Warden, brought here by an accident, became for some time our companion.

Grace. I have sometimes feared of late years that this might have been. You never loved him—and you married him, in your self sacrifice to me.

Mar. (*Drawing her sister closer to her.*) I might have loved

him once---and did not then. But I wished that you should feel me wholly lost to Alfred---hopeless to him---dead! Do you understand me, love? I saw Mr. Warden, and confided in his honour; charged him with my secret, on the eve of his and my departure. He kept it. Do you understand me, dear? [*Grace looks confused.*] My love, my sister! Listen to me. There are countries dearest, where those who would abjure a misplaced passion, or would strive against some cherished feeling of their hearts and conquer it, retire into a hopeless solitude, and close the world against themselves, and worldly loves, and hopes for ever. When women do so, they assume that name which is so dear to you and me, and call each other sisters. But there may be sisters, Grace, who, in the broad world out of doors, and underneath its free sky, and in its crowded places, and among its busy life, and trying to assist and cheer it, and to do some good, learn the same lesson, and with hearts still fresh and young, and open to all happiness, and means of happiness, can say the battle is long past, the victory long won, and such a one am I. You understand me, now?

Grace. Sister!

Mar. Oh, Grace---dear Grace! if you were not a happy wife and mother---if I had no little namesake here---if Alfred, my kind brother, were not your own fond husband---from whence could I derive the ecstasy I feel to-night? But as I left here, so I have returned. My heart has known no other love, my hand has never been bestowed apart from it. I am still your maiden sister---unmarried, unbetrothed---your own old-loving Marion, in whose affection you exist alone, and have no partner, Grace.

Aunt Martha (*Who entered with Marion.*) This is a weary day for me---(*Embraces her Nieces*)---for I lose my dear companion in making you all happy. And what can you give me in return for my Marion?

Dr. J. A converted brother.

Aunt M. That's something, to be sure. But I don't know what's to become of me, without my Marion, after we have lived together half a dozen years---

Dr. J. You must come and live here, I suppose.

Alf. Or get married, aunt.

Dr. J. It's a world full of hearts, after all---(*Kissing Marion and Grace.*)---and a serious world, with all its follies:---(even with mine, which was enough to have swamped the whole globe!)---and a world on which the sun never rises but it looks upon a thousand bloodless battles, that are some set off against the miseries and wickedness of battle fields---

and a world we need be careful how we libel—(Heaven for give us!)—for it is a world of sacred mysteries, and its creator only knows what lies beneath the surface of his lightest image.

MR. SNITCHEY enters the orchard.

Snitch. I beg your pardon, Doctor, but have I liberty to come in? (*Kissing Marion's hand*) If Mr. Craggs had been alive, my dear Miss Marion, he would have had great interest in this occasion. Mrs. Snitchey, my dear, you are among old friends.

MRS. SNITCHEY enters from D. (*She kisses Marion.*)

Mrs. Snitchey, take this as a warning, to have wiser and more charitable eyes another time. Miss Marion, I brought a friend of yours along with me. Here, mistress! (*Clemency and Ben Britain enter the orchard slowly—Clemency crying, her apron to her eyes.*) Now, mistress! (*Checking Clemency, as she is running towards Marion.*) What's the matter with you?

Clem. The matter? (*Laughs and cries.*) Oh! oh! (*Throws herself into the arms of every one—the last Britain's—he cries too—her apron over her head.* During this Warden enters the orchard, and stands apart from the rest. Aunt Martha moves to him, and converses, then whispers to Marion.)

Snitch. Mr. Britain—(*puts his hand in his pocket and draws forth a paper.*)—I congratulate you. You are now the whole and sole proprietor of that freehold tenement, commonly called or known by the sign of "The Nutmeg Grater." Your wife lost one house through my client, Mr. Michael Warden, and now gains another.

Ben. Would it make any difference, in the vote, if the sign was altered, sir?

Snitch. Not in the least.

Ben. Then—(*Giving him back paper.*)—just clap in the words, "and Thimble." Will you be so good? And I'll have the two mottoes painted up in the parlour instead of my wife's portrait.

Ward. (*Advancing.*) And let me claim the benefit of those inscriptions. Mr. Heathfield, and Doctor Jeddler, I might have deeply wronged you both—that I did not, is no virtue of my own. I abused the hospitality of this house, and learnt my own demerits, with a shame I never have forgotten—yet with some profit, too, I would fain hope, from one to whom I made my humble supplication for forgiveness, when I knew her merit and my deep unworthiness. In a few days I shall quit this place for ever. I entreat your pardon. "Do as you would be done by"—"Forget and forgive!"

Dr. J. No, no! We must all practise the motto. (Takes his hand.) You must not go again, if I have any knowledge of futurity. Time will work wonders. Your house may not be sold, but opened afresh, with golden hospitality.

Ward. And Marion——[Looks at Marion.]

Grace. [Leading her towards him.] Yes, dear sister, I am sure, hereafter, you will become his. Consent, and——

Ward. My---my wife!

Grace. Yes, a wife. The pride and honour of all the country side. [Places Marion's hand in his.]

Dr. J. Bless you, my dear children! Life's no joke, after all! [Laughs, and embraces Marion and Grace.]

Clem. & Ben. Hurrah for "The Nutmeg Grater and the Thimble!" "Forget and forgive!" Hurrah! One cheer more!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.